

50 attend maple tour

About fifty people participated in the Wayne County Maple Tour held recently in southern Wayne County.

The first stop was made at the Quentin Mead sugar bush, in Madisonville. This operation normally puts out between 1,000 and 1,250 taps per year with a yearly maple syrup yield of between 150 and 200 gallons. Everyone on the tour had a chance to see one of Quentin's sugar bushes that was collected entirely by plastic tubing. Tim Mead described the entire operation and also explained how the sap was collected and then transported to the farm. Some innovative, home-made equipment has been designed to help collect and move sap. Once the sap is transported to the farm, it is dumped into a stainless steel holding tank and then gravity-fed into a four-foot by twelve-foot wood-fired evaporator. Everyone on the tour was then treated to refreshments of coffee and maple-syrup-glazed sticky buns.

The second stop on the tour was at the Ted Franc sugar bush. This sugar bush is located only a short ways from the village

of Sterling. Ted has over 60 years of experience making maple syrup. Ted normally puts out about 2,000 taps spread over 25 acres of rather steep woods. His yearly maple syrup production is about 400 gallons. This maple syrup operation is 100 percent plastic tubing with all of the sap collected in a 2,000 gallon stainless steel tank. From here, it is gravity fed into a five-foot by fourteen-foot wood-fired evaporator. Ted normally burns about 25 cords of wood each season in making maple syrup. This is basically a one-man operation with seasonal help from family members. Everyone on the tour was treated to cups of hot, maple syrup.

The last stop was at the Ralph Curtis sugar bush. This operation is located along Route 196, about one and one half miles from the village of Sterling. Ralph and Marie Curtis have been in the maple syrup business about 27 years. They normally put out about 2,500 taps over a 30 acre patch of woods. Yearly maple syrup production is between 750 and 1,000 gallons. A majority of Ralph's sugar bush is collected with plastic tubing. Several hundred buckets are also used in this operation. The plastic tubing system empties into a 4,000 gallon stainless steel tank. From here, the sap is boiled down in a five-foot by fourteen-foot evaporator and a four-foot by twelve-foot evaporator. Both of these evaporators are wood-fired.

It takes approximately 35 cords of wood to make the 750 to 1,000 gallons of maple syrup each year.

Marie Curtis showed everyone the maple museum she has set-up in the loft of the sugar house. Many pieces of old maple equipment are on display as well as some educational displays involving the maple tree and maple syrup.

Everyone on tour then had an opportunity to sample Marie's maple cream spread on crackers.

Earlier in the day, the tour stopped at the Sterling Community Grange where the ladies of the grange served a pancake, sausage, home fries, egg and maple syrup lunch.

The Wayne County Maple Tour is sponsored by the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Wayne County Extension Service. The tour is sponsored annually to help promote the maple industry in Wayne County and to help county citizens become better informed of county maple producers and maple products available.

Information on maple syrup production and maple recipes can be obtained by contacting the Wayne County Extension Service at 253-5970, extension 114.